

## V.—ON THE OCCURRENCE OF TIGERS ON THE ISLANDS OF BOMBAY AND SALSETTE

A large tiger was shot in the vicinity of the Vehar Lake, Salsette on Tuesday, January 22, 1929. The animal was killed by Mr. J. J. Sutari, to whom I am indebted for the following particulars. Mr. Sutari and a party of friends were out after the usual type of game the Salsette jungles provide, which is mainly wild boar. They took up their positions in the vicinity of the south end of the lake shortly after sunset and waited for something to turn up. Towards 10 p. m. Mr. Sutari's attention was aroused by the sounds of some animal approaching. One can well imagine his astonishment when a tiger walked out of the shadows into the moonlight. The tiger came steadily on, when at a distance of 12 yards, Sutari fired his 12-bore loaded with ball and dropped the animal in his tracks. The tiger in question, a straggler from the main land, probably crossed over by swimming the Thana Creek. An animal doing so would find immediate shelter in the jungles which cover the hilly portions of Salsette.

Tigers appear to have been fairly plentiful in Salsette at the end of the eighteenth century. Hector MacNeil, (*Archæologia*, vol. vii, 1873) tells us that in 1761 'the Governor and most of the gentlemen of Bombay used to go annually on a pleasure party to Salsette to hunt Wild Boar and Royal Tiger both of which were found there in great plenty.' Records of the occurrence of tiger in these islands during the nineteenth century are few and far between. In 1806, two tigers were seen near General Macpherson's bungalow at Kurla, while a few days previously two persons were carried off from a village a little further north, it is presumed by the same animals. On February 9, 1822, a tiger on Malabar Hill came down and quenched its thirst at Gowalia Tank and ran off up the hill between the Hermitage and Prospect Lodge. The imprint of its feet were clearly visible the next morning (*Bombay Courier*, February 10, 1822). The *Bombay Courier* of December, 1829, records the sudden appearance of a tiger at Mazagon, the animal apparently swam across the harbour and landed near the ruined Mazagon fort. It was driven into the compound of Mr. Henshaw's bungalow where it was eventually shot by the guard of the Dockyard and several Arabs. It measured 8' 8". On March 2, 1858, the crew of the steamer *Aden* killed a large tiger which was swimming across to Mazagon from the opposite shore. The animal attempted to board a small boat and was kept off with hand pikes by the lascars. It was eventually dispatched with 'six balls through its head'. (*Bombay Times*, March 6, 1858). In May of the same year a tiger was killed in Mahim woods by a young Portuguese, while on January 26, 1863, another tiger was killed at Mahim after mauling a Parsi cart-owner and committing other damage. (*Bombay Times*, January 27, 1863). James Douglas (*Bombay and Western India*) writing about tigers in Salsette gives an amusing narrative of a 'traveller (was it Silk Buckingham?) in Salsette who was suddenly surprised by his palkee being dropped and the coolies bolting. The palkee was closed, and he soon felt

outside the *Jhilmils* something of a fee-faw-fum character. Stripes was wide awake and the coolies, up a tree, were wide awake also. He didn't sleep much that night I tell you.' In 1907, a tiger was shot at Pir Pau, Trombay, near Sandow Castle by Mr. Mullan of the Bombay Port Trust. This with the one cited above are the most recent records.

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## VI.—THE TIGER'S METHOD OF MAKING A 'KILL'

(With a photo)

I had the good fortune this year to witness, by the light of the moon nearly at the full, the killing of a tethered buffalo by a tigress.

The near approach of the tigress was made known to me at 10 o'clock by the sudden uprising of the buffalo from his quiet chewing of the cud. He stared into the forest. Then the tread of the tigress—who had given up all concealment as she knew her prey could not now escape her—was heard among the leaves. The head of the great feline came into the field of view of the binoculars, her fine ruff—for she possessed an unusually large one—shining conspicuously in the brilliant rays of the moon. I could see every whisker and hair on her face.

Slowly the whole of her lithe but massive form came into view, advancing by short steps, with every muscle taut and alert for instant action. The tethered bait, which had up to now remained motionless, staring at the dread apparition, made a sudden effort to break loose. That was the signal which launched the tigress to the attack. There was a short scuffle, a choked beilow, and then absolute silence as the tigress stood, the back of the buffalo's neck in the vise of her jaws. All but her head was in the shadow of the tree, but I could make out that she was straddled across the body of the buffalo. What she did with her paws could not be made out, there was no apparent movement but presently I heard the crack, and the crack, of the breaking of the vertebræ of the victim's neck.

Now, the killing finished, the tigress opened her jaws and the lifeless body of the victim fell with a helpless flop on to the ground. A few moments she stood, wholly alert to her surroundings and gazing this way and that. Then she seized the body by the hindquarters to drag it away; after several tremendous tugs she gave up the attempt and, squatting at the tail end of the carcass, now stretched to the full length of the wire tethering rope, commenced to tear it open. This took but a second or two, and with great gulps she began the hot meal she had so easily obtained.

In ten minutes she suddenly got up and went straight off into the forest behind her. She appeared drunk with her success, or the rich wine with her dinner, for she made no attempt at quiet progress, barging through the jungle with a crashing of undergrowth